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AUTHOR Bamburg, Jerry D.
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ABSTRACT

The issue of low teacher expectations of students is addressed, bearing in mind that any effort to address low teacher expectations for students that does not address the broader issue of school change will fail. The first section of the monograph explores the relationship between teacher expectations and student achievement. The second section identifies and discusses the factors that contribute to low teacher expectations for students that exist both within the classroom and beyond the classroom door. These include: (1) misuses of testing; (2) misdiagnosis of students' potential to learn; (3) teacher efficacy beliefs; (4) classroom and instructional strategies; (5) lack of resources; (6) lack of parent involvement; and (7) lack of vision and the issue of leadership. The final section describes the changes that must occur in order to resolve the problem of low teacher expectations. Urban educators need to change their beliefs about the abilities of students and their capacities for learning. (Contains 49 references.) (SLD)

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Urban Monograph Series

Raising Expectations to Improve Student Learning

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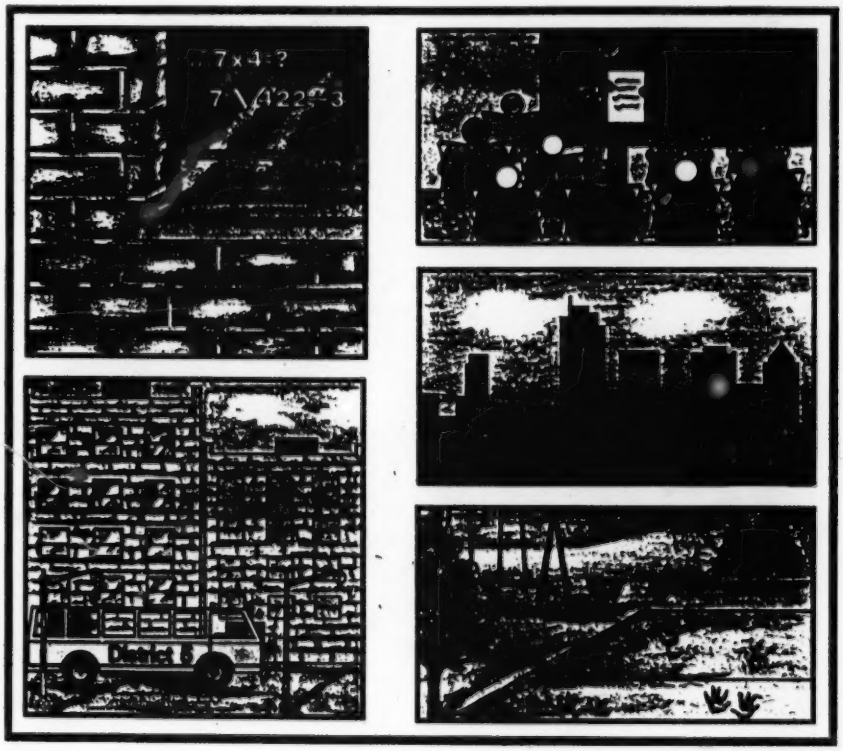

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Dr. Jerry D. Bamburg
University of Washington at Seattle

MD30270

NCREL

North Central Regional Educational Laboratory
1900 Spring Road, Suite 300
Oak Brook, IL 60521
(708) 571-4700, Fax (708) 571-4716

Jeri Nowakowski:	Executive Director
Lynn J. Stinnette:	Director, Urban Education
Robin LaSota:	Program Coordinator, Urban Education
Robin Fleming:	Program Assistant, Urban Education
Lenaya Raack:	Editor
John Blaser:	Editor
Stephanie L. Merrick:	Production Coordinator
Melissa Chapko:	Graphic Designer
Mary Ann Larson:	Desktop Publisher
Holly Jovanovich:	Assistant, Urban Education

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Dear Colleague:

We are pleased to introduce the Urban Education Monograph Series, a new initiative of the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL) that works to connect practitioners and policymakers to important research and promising practices.

Throughout the region's urban centers, children and youth continue to achieve at levels significantly below national norms. While many urban students complete school and make a successful transition to higher education, increasing numbers of poor and minority youth in the region's urban centers either drop out of school or finish school lacking the skills and knowledge needed to continue their education successfully and to participate fully in today's high-tech, information-service economy.

NCREL believes that connecting practitioners and policymakers to knowledge about what works in urban schools is an important step in crafting effective solutions to the achievement gap between the region's urban children and others. Traditionally, solutions to problems of urban schools have focused on isolated programs or single subjects, such as reading, and have relied heavily on knowledge from one field—education. The achievement gap between urban children and others is the result of many factors (e.g., social, cultural, and economic). Solutions that draw on a broad knowledge base are more likely to be effective in attacking the problems that impede urban children's success in school than solutions that rely solely on knowledge about schooling.

The Urban Education Monograph Series connects practitioners and policymakers to important information about what works in urban schools by drawing on knowledge from the fields of education, sociology, cultural anthropology, and others. This series, which is being published during 1994 and 1995, addresses such issues as the following:

- Building a Collaborative School Culture (Kent Peterson, University of Wisconsin at Madison, with Richard Brietzke, Purdy Elementary School, Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin)
- Raising Expectations to Improve Student Learning (Jerry Bamburg, University of Washington at Seattle)
- Synthesis of Scholarship on Multicultural Education (Geneva Gay, University of Washington at Seattle)
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- Multicultural Education: Challenges to Administrators and School Leadership (Carol Lee, Northwestern University, with an introduction by John Attinasi, California State University)
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We welcome your comments on the Urban Education Monograph Series and your suggestions about other issues that you would like addressed in the future.

Sincerely,

Lynn J. Stinnette

Lynn J. Stinnette
Director, Urban Education

Raising Expectations to Improve Student Learning

by Dr. Jerry D. Bamburg

Introduction

The teachers and school administrators who work in America's large cities face the daily challenge of educating children who are poor, usually minority, and often labeled disadvantaged. When the public tries to assess the performance of urban schools, it finds that achievement is invariably lower for students who are labeled poor or minority. Often, the initial reaction is to blame the schools, and more specifically the teachers who work with the students on a daily basis.

This monograph addresses the issue of low teacher expectations for student achievement. Clearly, it is not acceptable for teachers, consciously or unconsciously, to engage in behavior that causes children to be academically unsuccessful. However, little can be gained by demanding that teachers change what they do in the classroom until educators also commit themselves to change what schools do and how they do it. Any effort to address low teacher expectations for students that does not address the broader issue of school change will fail.

This monograph has been organized into three sections. The first section explores the relationship between teacher expectations and student achievement. The second section identifies and discusses the factors that contribute to low teacher expectations for students that exist both within the classroom and beyond the classroom door. The final section describes the changes that must occur to resolve the problem of low teacher expectations for students.

Some of the recommendations in this monograph are addressed primarily to teachers. Others focus on schoolwide factors that are often beyond the direct control of individual teachers but exert a significant influence on teachers' beliefs, their sense of efficacy, and their willingness to change.

This monograph is based on the belief that the goal of public education is to ensure that every child is educated—not merely to enable all children to attend school. It is with this goal in mind that this monograph was written.

Is There a Relationship Between Teacher Expectations and Student Achievement?

Beginning with *Pygmalion in the Classroom* (Rosenthal and Jacobson, 1968), an extensive body of research has been developed that describes how

teachers' expectations can influence student performance. While it would be misleading and inaccurate to state that teacher expectations determine a student's success, the research clearly establishes that teacher expectations do play a significant role in determining how well and how much students learn.

Although "teacher expectations" has many definitions, this monograph concentrates on three general types (Cooper, 1984). The first refers to the teacher's perceptions of where a student is "at the present moment." While not really a statement about expectations of future performance, it does help identify expectation effects. For instance, it has been noted that teachers who believe that they are interacting with bright students smile and nod their heads more often than teachers who believe that they are interacting with slow students. Teachers also lean toward and look into the eyes of smarter students more frequently (Chaikin, Sigler, and Derlega, 1974). Behaviors such as these are predicated upon how the teacher "perceived" the student initially.

The second type of expectation involves a teacher's prediction about how much academic progress a student will make over a specified period of time. It appears that "expected" improvement is only weakly correlated with a teacher's present assessment of the student. However, Beez (1970) found that students labeled "slow" may receive fewer opportunities to learn new material than students labeled "bright" and that slow students typically are taught less difficult material. The effect of such behavior is cumulative, and, over time, teachers' predictions of student achievement may in fact become true.

The third type of expectation is the degree to which a teacher over- or underestimates a student's present level of performance. This type of expectation results from a teacher's estimate of student ability based upon some formal assessment of that student's performance. It is most often driven by the use of a test that is perceived to provide an accurate measure of student ability.

The types of expectations described above result in two "effects" upon student performance. The first is called the self-fulfilling prophecy or the Pygmalion Effect. The second is called the sustaining expectation effect.

The Pygmalion Effect

Research into the ways in which teachers interact with their students and the relationship between those interactions and students' academic performance (Brophy and Good, 1978; Douglass, 1964; Rowe, 1969; Mackler, 1969; and others) shed considerable light on how teachers form expectations about their students and, more important, how teachers' expectations influence their behavior toward their students. Particularly noteworthy are the findings of Douglass (1964) and Mackler (1969), which are summarized as follows:

- Teachers' expectations about a student's achievement can be affected by factors having little or nothing to do with his or her ability, and yet these expectations can determine the level of achievement by confining learning opportunities to those available in one's track.

One should not ignore the importance of these findings, particularly in light of the evidence that the student often internalizes teachers' expectations over time. When this internalization occurs, the student's self-concept and motivation to achieve may decline over time until the student's ability to achieve to his or her potential is damaged.

Sustaining Expectations Effect

The second type of expectation observed in classrooms is the "sustaining expectations effect." The sustaining expectations effect "occur[s] when teachers respond on the basis of their existing expectations for students rather than to changes in student performance caused by sources other than the teacher" (Cooper and Good, 1983). When a teacher misses an opportunity to improve student performance because he or she responds to a student based on how the teacher expects the student to perform rather than on other indices showing improved student potential, a sustaining expectations effect has occurred.

The evidence is clear that low teacher expectations for students can negatively affect student performance. Meanwhile, the evidence that high expectations for students can also have an impact has been clearly documented. A study by Edmonds and Frederiksen (1978) found that teachers in instructionally effective inner-city schools had "high expectations" for all of their students. Other studies have yielded comparable results (Brophy and Evertson, 1976; McDonald and Elias, 1976; Rutter, et al., 1979; Andrews, Soder, and Jacoby, 1986; Bamburg and Andrews, 1989).

Teacher Expectations and Student Achievement: The Evidence

During spring 1992, the Center for Effective Schools (CES) at the University of Washington surveyed the staff of 87 elementary and secondary schools in four urban school districts (Chicago, Detroit, Indianapolis, and Milwaukee) as part of the data collection activities of the Academy for Urban School Leaders, which was sponsored by the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL). The surveys, based on CES research, were designed to assess staff perceptions of their school on nine school variables (instructional leadership of the principal, staff dedication, high expectations for student achievement, frequent monitoring of student progress, early identification of students with special learning needs, positive learning climate, multicultural education, and sex equity).

The survey results on the high expectations for student achievement variable indicated that a large percentage of the 2,378 teachers who responded did not have high expectations for the academic achievement of students in their schools.

Table I

High Expectations for Student Achievement (N=2,378 staff in 87 schools)

Item #

31. Most students in my school will perform at about the national average in academic achievement.

Percentage of staff members who:

Strongly Agree	3
Agree	22
Undecided	16
Disagree	40
Strongly Disagree	19

36. Most students in my school are capable of mastering grade level academic objectives.

Percentage of staff members who:

Strongly Agree	12
Agree	49
Undecided	13
Disagree	20
Strongly Disagree	6

43. Teachers in my school generally believe most students are able to master the basic read/math skills.

Percentage of staff members who:

Strongly Agree	12
Agree	49
Undecided	14
Disagree	19
Strongly Disagree	6

44. I expect that most students in my school will perform above the national average in academic achievement.

Percentage of staff members who:

Strongly Agree	12
Agree	49
Undecided	14
Disagree	19
Strongly Disagree	6

46. Nearly all of my students will be at or above grade level by the end of this year.

Percentage of staff members who:

Strongly Agree	6
Agree	24
Undecided	17
Disagree	38
Strongly Disagree	15

71. I expect most students in my school will perform below the national average in academic achievement.

Percentage of staff members who:

Strongly Agree	4
Agree	17
Undecided	17
Disagree	41
Strongly Disagree	22*

* Total percentage not equal to 100 percent due to rounding.

These results raise an important question: Do the expectations for student achievement expressed by teachers in these urban schools differ from the expectations generally found in schools? One way to answer this question is to compare the mean score on the high expectations for student achievement variable for all of the schools that CES has surveyed during the past seven years (N of schools = 800) with the mean score for the schools surveyed in this project (N of schools = 87). On a five-point scale (1 = low, 5 = high), the mean score for all schools was 3.61, while the mean score for the 87 schools in this project was 3.01. Percentile norms established by the Center show that the average mean score for the 87 schools in this study would place them at the seventh percentile in comparison with all schools. This result suggests that teachers in urban schools —regardless of grade level— have lower expectations for their students.

A content analysis of the items included in Table I concludes that they fall into two basic categories. One category of items (item numbers 36 and 43) asked teachers to assess their students' potential for learning. The responses are almost identical for both items: 61 percent of the respondents (combining Strongly Agree and Agree) indicated that their students did possess the potential to achieve.

The other items (31, 44, 48, and 71) have a very different focus. Although the wording varies, each of these items seeks to assess the staff's beliefs about how their students will actually perform in relationship to specific criteria. The teachers' responses to these items were markedly different from their responses to items 36 and 43. Space does not allow for a detailed discussion of the results on each of these items, but the evidence suggests that, to a large degree, staff did not believe that their students will perform well in school.

These results, which include responses from both elementary and secondary teachers, suggest that the teachers in these urban schools do not believe their students will be successful even though they believe that the students possess the potential to learn.

Low Expectations: Why Do They Exist?

While the effects of low teacher expectations are clearly observable in the classroom, the factors that contribute to these expectations may be less obvious. For instance, while some expectations result from the actions and beliefs of teachers, others occur as a result of factors that exist both inside and outside of the classroom. The following section will explore several of the factors that appear to contribute in significant ways to teachers' low expectations for student achievement.

The Misuses of Testing

One of the most significant issues confronting public education in the United States today is the lack of understanding about standardized tests and the appro-

priateness of their use in placing students in academic programs. Contributing to this misuse is the persistent belief that norm-referenced standardized achievement tests are an accurate gauge of a student's potential to learn.

The fundamental assumption underlying the use of such tests is that intelligence is stable and unchanging, rather than dynamic and malleable. In the United States, the testing community has historically embraced the view that intelligence is fixed and that through the administration of such tests it is possible to rank subjects accurately into categories such as gifted, average, and retarded (Hilliard, 1988).

Unfortunately, large segments of the education establishment have accepted this view and used such instruments to determine which students would benefit from a particular kind of education. Many school systems administer IQ tests to students and use the results to make decisions about the kind of educational programs that students need in order to succeed. These decisions, often made very early in students' educational careers, play a significant role in the type and quality of education that students receive during all of their years of formal education. *Keeping Track: How Schools Structure Inequality* (Oakes, 1985) found abundant evidence that such tests are routinely used to place students on an educational "track" at an early age. From that point on, students who have been categorized according to these tests often receive a substantially different level and caliber of instruction than other students. Unfortunately for the lower-track students, the education that they received is often of lesser quality because of the teachers' sincere belief that the test provided an accurate assessment of their capacity to learn.

Misdiagnosing Students' Potential to Learn

A second factor that often contributes to teachers' low expectations for their students is an emphasis on ability rather than effort in assessing the academic potential of students. How our society has confused these concepts is clearly described in *The Learning Gap* (Stevenson and Stigler, 1992).

The authors compared Japanese and Chinese educational practices with those found in the United States. They found that people in the two Asian countries acknowledged differences in individuals' innate abilities (no one would claim that all people are born with the same abilities), but considered hard work to be a more important factor than ability in students' academic achievement. In contrast, American children, teachers, and parents emphasized innate abilities as the major component of academic success.

The result is that for many American students the preoccupation with innate ability has resulted in a belief tantamount to "educational predestination." That is, innate ability—rather than effort, the amount and quality of instruction, and

parental involvement—is believed to be the key to academic success (Walberg, 1988).

This belief means that many American school children who perform poorly on standardized tests are perceived (and eventually perceive themselves) to have low ability. In turn, they believe that, regardless of how hard they work, they will not be able to master their lessons. In stark contrast, Chinese and Japanese cultures do not regard low scores as a sign of low ability, but rather as evidence that the student has not yet achieved his or her potential through persistence and hard work.

Of course, to some degree, these differences between Chinese and Japanese education and American education are cultural. The Chinese and Japanese belief in the value of effort is demonstrated by a Chinese children's story about Li Po, a poet who lived over a thousand years ago. Li Po saw an old woman sitting by a stream grinding a piece of iron. When asked what she was doing, she responded, "Making a needle." When Li Po asked how a piece of iron could possibly be ground into a needle, her answer was, "All you need is perseverance." Unfortunately, American students often miss the importance of this lesson. Ironically, while Americans have historically viewed themselves as rugged individualists who could accomplish whatever they wanted, this attitude does not appear to carry over into academic pursuits, where the belief is that either you have it or you don't and, therefore, either you can or you can't.

It also should be noted that the differences between the Chinese and Japanese and Americans in their perception of the relative importance of innate ability and effort are not limited to students' experiences at school. A study sought to determine whether these differences extended to mothers' beliefs about the factors that influenced children's success. Mothers from China, Japan, and the U.S. were asked which factor influenced their children's performance the most: effort, ability, difficulty of the task, or luck. All three groups ranked effort as the most important, but Chinese and Japanese mothers gave more points to effort than did the American mothers. Furthermore, American mothers gave substantially more points to ability than did the Chinese and Japanese mothers. Thus, evidence indicates that, in America, ability is also seen as being more important than effort outside the school setting.

Americans' tendency to rate innate ability more highly than effort manifests itself in many areas other than academic performance. The way Americans teach art to children reflects a widely held view that proficiency in art depends on innate talent. For instance, many Americans blame their failure to draw a credible representation of an object on lack of ability, explaining, "I am just no good at drawing." In Chinese and Japanese cultures, the response to a person who had

difficulty drawing would be, "Isn't it a shame that no one taught you how to draw."

Tracking persists in American education and is supported by the myth that IQ testing is valid.

Americans' attitude toward mathematics is perhaps the most striking indication of the emphasis upon ability rather than effort and its negative effects on student performance. According to one American researcher, American children appear to believe that if a mathematics problem is solvable, one should be able to do it in less than ten minutes. The unfortunate result is that American students are likely to give up before they reach genuine understanding. When this hypothesis was tested, researchers finally had to terminate the experiment because the Japanese children, refusing to give up, kept working on the problem long beyond the time that had been allotted.

In stark contrast to these findings is the experience of math teacher Jaime Escalante at Garfield High School in Los Angeles. Escalante provides strong evidence that emphasizing effort (and practice) can pay off, particularly when a teacher who believes that the students can succeed provides support to the students. When asked about his approach to teaching, Escalante said:

> "I do not recruit these students by reviewing test scores or grades, nor are they necessarily among the "gifted" or on some kind of "high IQ track," because I believe that tracking is unworkable and unproven as a guarantee that students will be challenged into the program of classes best suited to them. My sole criterion for acceptance in this program is that the students want to be a part of it and sincerely want to learn math."

Tracking persists in American education and is supported by the myth that IQ testing is valid. This belief is often bolstered by the arguments of many educators that education is most effective when it is tailored to the needs, interests, and abilities of the children as measured by a test. Putting aside for the moment the question of whether tracking is moral and ethical in a system of public education, educators also need to question the appropriateness of placing students in groups based on ability when the test itself is predicated upon faulty assumptions about the nature of ability. Perhaps the greatest inequity of all, however, is that many educators use the results of these tests to establish their expectations for the students in their classes.

Teacher Efficacy

One important factor contributing to low teacher expectations for students is the level of expectations that teachers have for their own performance. For instance, one of the difficulties that teachers confront is that the number of important goals that they can pursue exceeds the number they can accomplish within their available time and energy. To survive, many teachers simplify the problem

by concentrating their efforts on the goals that they deem most important.

However, once the classroom door is closed, the goals that teachers actually act upon are often very different from the goals that they espouse, which leads to important differences in student achievement. In practice, this means that despite rhetoric implying a commitment to student achievement, some teachers emphasize "survival and convenience" goals, passing time in ways that are as pleasant as possible for themselves and their students. When such a bargain is "struck," the result is a compromised curriculum (Sedlak, et al., 1986; Powell, Farrar, and Cohen, 1985). At the other extreme are teachers who do not clearly focus upon any goals and try to accomplish everything that everyone wants. Unfortunately, the net result of such efforts is that they, too, accomplish very little of substance.

A major component of teacher efficacy is the issue of classroom control. In many urban schools, teachers experience a significant frustration about the gap between their expectations for students and the nature of the interactions that occur. Consequently, many teachers engage in classroom management practices in order to gain control over their students, even when they know that such behavior decreases students' opportunities to learn. Such a decision often leads to an internal conflict and a resulting lack of efficacy within the student. This result creates a dichotomy between behavior that enhances teachers' feelings of control while decreasing the students' responsibility for their own learning and behavior that reflects good pedagogy while decreasing teachers' feelings of control. Such a conflict is intensified if the teacher works in a school that values order and control over the academic achievement of its students.

Such decisions are particularly onerous because of the substantial evidence that teachers are more willing to relinquish "control" over classroom interactions when working with students who possess high expectations for their own performance than they are when working with students who possess low expectations (Cooper, Burger, and Seymour, 1979; Cooper, Hinkel, and Good, 1980). Stated differently, teachers are usually more willing to work with students who are thought to be high in ability because control is not perceived to be an issue. In contrast, teachers may limit their interactions with students who are perceived to be low in ability in order to maintain their feelings of control. If students are to be motivated to do well in school, they must believe that they can influence their own academic success (Uguroglu and Walberg, 1979). Their opportunities are substantially limited, however, when teachers have low expectations.

In conclusion, many teachers appear to have little faith in their students and even less in themselves. Hilliard (1991) states, "Just as there is a vast untapped potential, yes, genius, among the children,

there is also a vast untapped potential among the teachers who serve children." He believes that the intellectual and professional potential of teachers has been drastically underestimated by the education community as a result of the same mindset that has caused teachers to underestimate the intellectual potential of their students.

Classroom and Instructional Strategies

Research in urban education suggests that much of the curriculum development conducted in schools is driven by the belief that certain skills are "basic" and must be mastered before students can go on to achieve more "advanced" skills such as reading comprehension, written composition, and mathematical reasoning. The result is that many students, particularly those who are deemed to be "at risk," receive instruction centered on basics such as phonetic decoding and arithmetic operations to the exclusion of reasoning activities, reading for meaning, and written communication (Means, Chelemer, and Knapp, 1991).

Research in cognitive science suggests that educators should discard old assumptions about how children think and process new information and view children's competencies as evolving both within and outside of the schools. Such a model contends that teachers should start with what students know and use this knowledge as a beginning point in providing educational experiences. It also is based on the belief that students possess the capacity to engage in higher-order thinking.

Similar concerns about the curriculum and pedagogy employed in urban schools were described in an article entitled "The Pedagogy of Poverty Versus Good Teaching" (Haberman, 1991). The author states that the following set of teaching acts constitute the core functions of urban teaching:

- giving information
- asking questions
- giving directions
- making assignments
- monitoring seat work
- reviewing assignments
- giving tests
- reviewing tests
- assigning homework
- reviewing homework
- settling disputes
- punishing noncompliance
- marking papers
- giving grades

According to Haberman, any one of these 14 acts might have a beneficial effect. However, when performed to the

systematic exclusion of other acts, they constitute a "pedagogy of poverty" that is predicated upon four syllogisms:

- Teaching is what teachers do. Learning is what students do. Therefore, students and teachers are engaged in different activities.

- Teachers are in charge and responsible. Students are people who still need to develop appropriate behavior. Therefore, when students follow teachers' directions, appropriate behavior is being taught and learned.

- Students represent a wide range of individual differences. Many students have handicapping conditions and lead debilitating home lives. Therefore, ranking of some sort is inevitable; some students will end up at the bottom of the class while others will finish at the top.

- Basic skills are a prerequisite for leaning and living. Students are not necessarily interested in basic skills. Therefore, directive pedagogy must be used to ensure that youngsters are compelled to learn their basic skills (Haberman, 1991).

This section has presented several perspectives suggesting that the curricular and pedagogical models found in most urban schools are driven by a conceptual view of disadvantaged students as possessing deficiencies that must be corrected. This view is based upon an assumption that the children who attend urban schools come from impoverished home environments that have provided few of the skills and little of the knowledge that students need in order to experience academic success. Many urban schools have sought to address this "deficit" by developing a curriculum and using pedagogical strategies based on a set of expectations holding that poor and minority students possess a limited capacity to learn until the deficit has been eliminated.

Lack of Resources

A major contributor to many of the problems facing urban schools is their appalling lack of resources. Jonathan Kozol's *Savage Inequalities* (1991) eloquently describes the financial inequities that face many urban school districts in this country. As an example, an urban newspaper recently reported that the city's elementary schools often run out of money for supplies prior to the end of the year and local parent organizations are asked to fill the gap. Unfortunately, those schools with students from predominantly low-income neighborhoods find it more difficult to obtain the needed resources, and the students in those schools simply have to do without. Similar problems exist with regard to textbooks and other instructional materials and equipment. Recently, a local urban elementary school received a grant from a private foundation to install and network computers in all of the school's classrooms. Now that it has the computers, the school has been waiting six months for the district to send some-

one out to install the wiring, despite repeated pleas that it do so.

In many urban schools, the problem of creating an appropriate learning environment often takes a back seat to more fundamental issues of health and safety. Maintenance is a major problem, particularly in cities, because many of the schools are old and outdated. The ability to provide adequate heat, sanitation, and safety for the students and staff in urban schools is a major challenge that is largely ignored. Such problems must be addressed if schools are to become places in which teaching and learning are going to occur, but they cannot be addressed until schools possess adequate resources.

... the teachers who work in our nation's cities have the greatest need for advanced training, yet they receive the fewest opportunities.

Perhaps even more critical than the need for additional resources for facilities, supplies, and instructional materials is the need for sufficient resources for training and staff development. As student populations become more diverse, their needs become more complex. Meanwhile, as increased knowledge about innovative strategies becomes available, the need to provide increased opportunities for staff development becomes more critical. Guskey (1982) investigated whether teacher expectations might change if teachers were given opportunities to improve their instructional effectiveness. The results suggested that changes in teacher expectations did occur and that high-quality staff development could be a significant factor in attaining the twin goals of teacher efficacy and student success. Unfortunately, the lack of resources in many urban school districts and the constraints on time mean that such training is rare. The result is that the teachers who work in our nation's cities have the greatest need for advanced training, yet they receive the fewest opportunities.

Parent Involvement

Ninety percent of a student's life is spent outside of school, and yet, in many urban schools, the involvement of parents and community members is practically nonexistent. One of the factors that appear to contribute to early student success in school is the acquisition of the intellectual tools and social skills needed to function effectively in a school environment prior to the student's entry into school. In the eyes of many urban educators, the knowledge that so many children come from environments in which these tools and skills are not taught indicates that parents have little interest in the education of their children.

When elementary teachers have to teach these readiness skills at the same time that they are trying to introduce the regular curriculum, they often become very frustrated. If not addressed, these frustrations will not end in elementary school. Secondary teachers often confront the nearly insurmountable task

of trying to overcome these deficits by placing such students in remedial programs that are poorly designed and taught. In such a situation, student attendance often becomes sporadic, discipline problems frequently increase in number and/or severity, and little educational progress is made. Teacher frustrations are compounded when parents are seen as unwilling to take an active role in supporting the school's efforts to educate their children.

Confronted with a lack of parental involvement and/or support (both real and perceived) in many urban schools, it is hard for educators to accept that: (1) the parents of poor and minority children value education, (2) the home environments of poor and minority families may include experiences that are conducive to student success in schools, and (3) the reluctance of many parents to become "involved" may result more from their insecurity about interacting with school officials than from a lack of interest in their children's welfare. Unfortunately, even when teachers understand these concepts, their personal frustrations may blind them to the need to find ways to involve parents.

Historically poor and minority parents often have been viewed as part of the problem rather than part of the solution. We need to remember that it is the children who suffer from this unnecessary estrangement. Parents do care about their children, and schools in today's society need to take the lead in fostering partnerships with them.

Educators often ask what type of parental involvement they should seek. It is not the purpose of this monograph to present a detailed description of how schools might involve parents. However, the following example describes how one school chose to respond.

It took over a year of hard work by the staff to assist in establishing a parent organization that could operate independently, but their efforts have clearly paid off and they are actively and constructively involved in their children's education.

The principal and staff of one urban elementary school determined that a significant level of parental involvement was needed if the school was to be successful in addressing the needs of their students. Because many of the parents were too poor to join a PTA, the school formed its own parent group that required no membership. This school brought in corporate executives to help the parent group write several successful grants to fund parent activities, and when parent meetings are held child care and hot meals are provided. As a result, as many as 75 percent of the parents/guardians of the school attend parent meetings. It took over a year of hard work by the staff to assist in establishing a parent organization that could operate independently, but their efforts have clearly paid off and they are actively and constructively involved in their children's

education. Success stories such as this one demonstrate that parents do want to be involved and will participate when given the opportunity.

Lack of Vision and the Issue of Leadership

One of the most challenging issues in schools is the lack of clarity about what is important in the school. A related issue is the confusion about what role the principal should play in helping to shape the school's vision.

The schools that have been most successful in addressing and increasing the academic achievement of their students have benefited from a clarity of purpose that is grounded in a shared set of core values and beliefs.

Lack of clarity about purpose manifests itself in a myriad of ways. It may appear as a lack of commitment to a clearly defined set of core values. Or the core values and vision that do exist may be the principal's only. A third possibility is that the school contains no shared core values and therefore no shared vision. When faced with a lack of clarity about the school's vision, regardless of the reason, most teachers retreat to the classroom. Such behavior often leads to a school that in reality is not a school at all but a collection of cottage industries operating in isolation under the same roof. As a result of this isolation, the school may contain as many different sets of expectations for students as there are teachers in the school.

Related to the issue of vision is that of leadership. Unfortunately, in many schools leadership is either: (1) absent; (2) viewed as the personal prerogative of the principal, which emphasizes the "leader" rather than "vision"; or (3) so widely dispersed among various stakeholders that the school is actually adrift without any leadership. Schools, like any organization, function best when staff have a clear idea about what is important. The schools that have been most successful in addressing and increasing the academic achievement of their students have benefited from a clarity of purpose that is grounded in a shared set of core values and beliefs.

Primary among the beliefs that school staff must share are high expectations for all students and for themselves. Such beliefs are not the personal domain of the principal. Successful schools show a distinct movement away from the concept of principal as *leader* toward the concept of *leadership* by all staff. This concept is driven by the belief that all members of a school, regardless of their title or area of responsibility, possess the capacity to influence those around them. Depending upon how they demonstrate their influence and promote their beliefs, they exert leadership. In such a school, this type of leadership ensures that the day-to-day activities are consistent with the core values and vision. Unfortunately, in too many schools such leadership simply does not occur.

What Can Be Done About Low Expectations in the Classroom and in the School?

Overview

The previous discussion identified several factors and conditions that contribute to low teacher expectations for students. Consideration of these issues inevitably leads to the question, "What can be done?" Despite the complexity of the issue, encouraging evidence suggests that much can be done if the issue is approached thoughtfully and comprehensively. If educators are truly serious about addressing this issue, they must recognize that interventions need to occur at multiple levels simultaneously. They must focus on interactions (1) inside the classroom between the teacher and students; (2) between the classroom and the school and/or district; and (3) between the school and the parents. It is important to note that the interventions described in this section should not be approached in a sequential fashion. For instance, it is unreasonable to expect major changes in a teacher's expectations for students without addressing factors that are outside the influence of the teacher's behavior but affect teacher performance.

Asa Hilliard describes many of the current reform efforts as "rearranging the technical and logistical chairs on the educational Titanic" (Hilliard, 1991). He goes on to explain that fundamental change will occur only if we are committed to "deep restructuring," which, in turn, will occur only when we:

> "...draw up an appropriate vision of human potential, and the design of human institutions, of the creation of a professional work environment, of the linkage of school activities and community directions, of creating human bonds in the operation of appropriate socialization activities, and of aiming for the stars for the children and for ourselves academically and socially."

In short, the kinds of changes that are needed will take place only when we begin to view schools as complex systems in which every decision has long-term implications. Peter Senge, professor in the Sloan School of Business at MIT, describes just such a way of viewing organizations in *The Fifth Discipline* (1990). According to Senge, a "learning organization" creates conditions that allow everyone to be a learner and a leader simultaneously. Hilliard's description of deep restructuring is consistent with this concept:

They need to experience the joy of collaborative discussion, dialogue, critique, and research. An enriched academic foundation is definitely a prerequisite for an enriched pedagogical foundation, and together the two provide a level of comfort for the teacher who supports professional dialogue as well as teacher-student dialogue. The primary roles that the teacher ought to play in service to children are enhanced by the development of the teacher's intellectual power and professional socialization (Hilliard, 1991).

If educators are truly committed to creating schools in which expectations are high for all children, then it is incumbent upon them to recreate schools as learning organizations in which teachers, administrators, students, and parents work together to create the kinds of schools they desire.

The importance of recognizing the existence of our mental models is not to replace our traditional assumptions with new ones. Rather, it is important to develop the capacity to suspend our beliefs in order to question what we do and why.

In the Classroom

The Acquisition of New Knowledge and Skills

Evidence clearly indicates that many teachers use teaching strategies that do not promote learning. A major contributing factor is the lack of training about promising practices in curriculum and instruction. However, it is important to recognize that among the biggest obstacles to new learning are our beliefs about how people learn. One way to think about these beliefs was described in *The Fifth Discipline* as "mental models"—implicit assumptions that determine how we view the world and how we make decisions. In education, these "theories-in-use," which may differ considerably from our espoused theories, determine how we view our students as well as how we make decisions about how to teach them.

The importance of recognizing the existence of our mental models is not to replace our traditional assumptions with new ones. Rather, it is important to develop the capacity to suspend our beliefs in order to question what we do and why. As an example, when we explore the tremendous amount of research in cognitive learning from the past decade, we find significant reasons to change how we educate children. This research implies that we have been engaging in instructional strategies that are inappropriate. As educators, we must make a personal commitment to pursue new knowledge and to allow that knowledge to influence what we believe and what we do as educators.

Brain Research

A major contributing factor to low teacher expectations for students is the traditional belief we hold about how students learn. During the past ten years, our understanding of the brain and how it works—as well as of the kind of environment in which it works most effectively—has increased significantly. The following material adapted from an ASCD publication, *Teaching and the Human Brain* (Caine and Caine, 1991), summarizes some of what we now know about how humans learn and some implications for educators.

- **The brain is a parallel processor.** Thoughts, emotions, imagination, and predispositions operate simultaneously and interact with other modes of information processing and with the expan-

sion of general social and cultural knowledge.

Implications for education: Good teaching means that teachers must use methodologies that enable them to orchestrate the learner's experience so that all aspects of the brain's operation are addressed.

- **Learning engages the entire physiology.** Learning is as natural as breathing; however, its performance can be negatively affected by stress and threat (Ornstein and Sobel, 1987).

  Implications for education: Awareness of the need for stress management, nutrition, exercise, and relaxation must be built into the learning process. In addition, there can be a five-year difference in maturation between any two children of the same age. Expecting equal achievement on the basis of chronological age is inappropriate.

- **The search for meaning is innate.** The search for meaning (making sense of our experiences) and the need to act on our environment are automatic.

  Implications for education: The learning environment needs to provide stability and familiarity. At the same time, provisions must be made to satisfy the brain's curiosity and hunger for discovery and challenge. Lessons need to be exciting, meaningful, and offer students abundant choices. The more lifelike, the better. For many programs for gifted children, these implications are taken for granted and the children are provided with a rich environment with complex and meaningful challenges. These strategies should be applied to all students.

- **The search for meaning occurs through patterning.** The brain is both artist and scientist. It is designed to perceive and generate patterns, and it resists having meaningless patterns imposed upon it (Hart, 1983; Lakoff, 1987). Meaningless patterns are isolated pieces of information that are unrelated to what makes sense to a student.

  Implications for education: Learners are patterning or perceiving and creating meanings all of the time in one way or another. We cannot stop them, but can influence the direction that their learning takes. Although we select much of what students are to learn, the ideal process is to present the information in a way that allows brains to extract patterns, rather than try to impose patterns.

- **Emotions are critical to patterning.** What we learn is influenced and organized by emotions and mind sets based on expectations, personal biases and prejudices, degrees of self-esteem, and the need for social interaction. Emotion and cognition cannot be separated (Halgren, Wilson, Squires, Engel, Walter, and Crandall, 1983;

Ornstein and Sobel, 1987; Lakoff, 1987; McGuiness and Pribram, 1980).

Implications for education: Because it is impossible to isolate the cognitive from the affective domain, the emotional climate of the school and classroom must be monitored on a consistent basis, using effective communication strategies and allowing for student and teacher reflection and metacognitive processes.

- **The brain processes parts and wholes simultaneously**. There is evidence of brain laterality, meaning significant differences between left and right hemispheres of the brain (Springer and Deutsch, 1985). In a healthy person, the two hemispheres are inextricably interactive, whether a person is dealing with words, mathematics, music, or art (Hand, 1984; Hart, 1985; Levy, J., 1985).

  Implications for education: People have enormous difficulty learning when either parts or wholes are overlooked. Good teaching necessarily builds understanding and skills over time because learning is cumulative and developmental. However, parts and wholes are conceptually interactive. They derive meaning from and give meaning to each other.

- **Learning always involves conscious and unconscious processes**. Most signals that are peripherally perceived enter the brain without the learner's awareness and interact at unconscious levels. Thus, we become our experiences and remember what we experience, not just what we are told. For example, a student can learn to sing on key and learn to hate singing at the same time.

  Implications for education: Much of the effort that we put into teaching and studying is wasted because students do not adequately process their experiences. What we call "active processing" allows students to review how and what they have learned so that they begin to take charge of learning and the development of personal meanings.

- **We have at least two different types of memory: a spatial memory system and a set of systems for rote learning.** We have a natural, spatial memory system that does not need rehearsal and allows for "instant memory" of experiences. It is always engaged and is inexhaustible. We also possess a set of systems designed for storing relatively unrelated information. The greater the separation of information and skills from prior knowledge and actual experience, the more we must depend on rote memory and repetition.

  Implications for education: Teachers are adept at teaching strategies that emphasize memorization. Although sometimes memorization is important and useful, teaching devoted to memorization does not facilitate the transfer

of learning and probably interferes with the subsequent development of understanding. By ignoring the personal world of the learner, educators actually inhibit the effective functioning of the brain.

- **We understand and remember best when facts and skills are embedded in natural, spatial memory.** Our native language is learned through multiple interactive experiences involving vocabulary and grammar. It is shaped by internal processes and by social interaction (Vygotsky, 1978). Language is an example of how specific "items" are given meaning when embedded in ordinary experiences. All education can be enhanced when this type of embedding is adopted.

  Implications for education: The embedding process depends on all of the other principles. Spatial learning is generally best invoked through experiential learning. Teachers need to use a great deal of real-life activity, including classroom demonstrations, projects, field trips, visual imagery of certain experiences and best performances, stories, metaphor, drama, and interaction of different subjects.

- **Learning is enhanced by challenge and inhibited by threat.** The brain downshifts under perceived threat and learns optimally when appropriately challenged. The central feature of downshifting is a sense of helplessness. The learner becomes less flexible and reverts to automatic and often more primitive routine behaviors.

  Implications for education: Teachers and administrators need to create a state of relaxed alertness in students—low in threat and high in challenge.

- **Each brain is unique.** Although we all have the same physiological systems, these systems are integrated differently in every brain. Moreover, because learning actually changes the structure of the brain, the more we learn, the more complex our brains become.

  Implications for education: Teaching should be multifaceted and allow all students to express visual, tactile, emotional, and auditory preferences. To accomplish these goals, we need to recognize that the need for fundamental change in schools themselves.

New Thinking About Educating Children of Poverty

In addition to research on cognitive thinking, many assumptions about the current deficit model for educating disadvantaged students have been rethought. The following are some of the traditional beliefs about such students:

- **The Learner**: Stereotypical ideas about the capabilities of a child who is poor and who belongs to an ethnic minority detract from an accurate assessment of the child's real educational problems and potential. By focusing on family "deficiencies,"

educators may miss the strengths of these students' cultures.

An Alternative View: While recognizing that disadvantaged students' experiences may contain gaps, the educator builds on the experience bases of these students and at the same time challenges them to expand their repertoires of experiences and skills. This perspective gains support from a decade or more of cognitive research, which portrays the learner as an active constructor of knowledge and meaning rather than a passive recipient of information and skills.

- **The Curriculum:** The conventional curriculum reveals two basic traits. First, it breaks up reading, writing, and mathematics into fixed sequences of discrete skills, ordered from the simplest (the basics) to the more complex (higher-order skills). Second, instruction typically promotes mastery by linear progression through the sequence. There is broad agreement among experts in mathematics and literacy that such curricular assumptions and structures are critically limited in several important respects. They often (1) underestimate students' capabilities; (2) postpone more challenging and interesting work for too long; (3) fail to provide a context for learning or for meaningfully using the skills that are taught; and (4) reinforce academic failure over the long term.

  An Alternative View: In contrast, the available evidence suggests that curricula should (1) focus on meaning and understanding from the beginning; (2) balance routine skill learning with novel and complex tasks; (3) provide a context for skill learning that establishes clear reasons for learning the skills and helps the students relate one skill to another; (4) influence attitudes and beliefs about academic content areas, as well as skills and knowledge; and (5) eliminate unnecessary redundancy in the curriculum.

- **The Role of the Teacher**: Since the 1970s, direct instruction has been the predominant mode of instruction for teachers who work with disadvantaged students. Typically, this strategy has included (1) teacher-controlled instruction with considerable time spent presenting information and directly supervising students' work; (2) extensive opportunities for practice and frequent corrective feedback; (3) careful structuring of academic tasks so that content can be introduced in small, manageable steps; (4) rapid pacing; and (5) whole-group or homogenous group formats. While evidence suggests that direct instruction does contribute to the acquisition of basic skills, educators are expressing a growing dissatisfaction with the ability of direct instruction to provide the more integrated, challenging curriculum that is needed.

  An Alternative View: Much evidence recommends the central role of the

teacher in instruction, but research also suggests that the most effective learning occurs when a balance exists between teacher-directed and student-directed instruction. This balance becomes particularly important when the goal of the instructional process is to engage students in activities that are intellectually challenging. To achieve this balance teachers should

- Explicitly teach the underlying thinking processes along with skills
- Encourage students to use each other as learning resources and structure their interaction accordingly
- Gradually turn over responsibility for students' learning to the students across the school year as they become more accustomed to constructing knowledge and applying strategies on their own

- **The Relationship Between Classroom Management and Academic Work**: Traditional thinking about classroom management has stressed the need for establishing an appropriate classroom "tone" and clear routines, with appropriate remediation for disruptive behavior. While these strategies are a good place to begin, they omit a critical element: the relationship between classroom management and the actual academic work that occurs in the classroom.

  An Alternative View: It is more appropriate to retain two elements of conventional thinking: (1) the teacher establishes general ground rules at the beginning of the year and (2) the teacher maintains order over time through vigilant monitoring and ongoing problem solving. However, it is also recommended that the teacher find a basis for order that emanates as much as possible from academics rather than generic rules, incentives, and consequences for misbehavior.

- **Classroom Organization**: The three traditional patterns for grouping students for instruction are: (1) ability-based reading groups in the primary grades; (2) formal or informal tracking in literacy and mathematics in the upper elementary grades; and (3) group-based supplemental services in both literacy and mathematics. These strategies appear to match students with appropriate learning tasks. But these "solutions," while appearing to address the needs of the students, exacerbate other problems. As an example, low-achieving students tend to become permanently segregated. As a result, student self-esteem problems become magnified, and the use of a more limited curriculum perpetuates the student's inability to demonstrate the academic proficiency that is needed to be placed in a regular program.

  An Alternative View: The research does not support eliminating ability-based grouping strategies altogether.

Schools should, however, consider (1) using heterogeneous grouping and ensuring that group arrangements are flexible and temporary; (2) integrating supplemental services into the regular classroom as often as possible; and (3) maximizing individual help to low-achieving students on an ad hoc basis rather than with long-term, group-based arrangements.

Minority Students and Affective Dissonance

The students in most urban schools are predominantly minority. A growing body of evidence suggests that for many of those students complex cultural obstacles to school success go far beyond any problems they experience because of language barriers, learning styles, or any of the other factors often cited as inhibiting their academic achievement. Fordham and Ogbu (1986) proposed that:

> "...one major reason black students do poorly in school is that they experience inordinate ambivalence and affective dissonance in regard to academic effort and social success. This problem arose partly because white Americans traditionally refused to acknowledge that black Americans are capable of intellectual achievement, and partly because black Americans subsequently began to doubt their own intellectual ability, began to define academic success as white people's prerogative, and began to discourage their peers, perhaps subconsciously, from emulating white people in academic striving, i.e., from 'acting white.' Because of the ambivalence, affective dissonance, and social pressures, many black students who are academically able do not put forth the necessary effort and perseverance in their schoolwork and, consequently, do poorly in school. Even black students who do not fail generally perform well below their potential for the same reasons."

Some minority groups generally experience much more academic success than others. This difference is often perceived as evidence that those who are not successful do not value education. In Ogbu (1984) and Ogbu and Matute-Bianchi (1986), the authors suggest that such a perspective is overly simplistic and ignores the circumstances that brought certain minority groups to this country, how they were treated upon their arrival, and how they have responded. The authors explain that it might be more useful to consider that there are three types of minorities: autonomous minorities, who are minorities primarily in a numerical sense; immigrant minorities, who came more or less voluntarily with the expectation of improving their economic, political, and social status; and ubordinate minorities, who were involuntarily and permanently incorporated into American society through slavery or conquest.

These distinctions are significant because, while the authors' research focuses on black students, it provides

important evidence about why certain populations of minority students (African-Americans, Mexican Americans, Native Hawaiians) experience the lack of success in schools that they do. It also suggests that educators need to understand this phenomenon and develop "programs to help students learn to divorce academic pursuit from the idea of acting white." In addition, their research suggests important ways in which the black community can respond by "developing programs to teach black children that academic pursuit is not synonymous with one-way acculturation into acting white." This message also needs to be carried to other minority communities so that they, too, can address this issue among their youth.

In the School

Knowledge of Current Reality

Increased knowledge about current research is important in making decisions about new strategies or innovations. However, as important as this knowledge is, teachers also need a clear understanding about why change is needed. For example, the survey data presented earlier in this monograph indicated that a majority of the teachers in the schools surveyed for NCREL did not expect their students to be successful even though they believed their students possessed the capacity to be successful. Is that conclusion accurate? What kinds of additional evidence could be collected that would confirm the accuracy of that conclusion or provide information that would lead to a different conclusion? This kind of information is seldom sought out.

Perhaps the simplest way of characterizing the importance of collecting information about "current reality" and sharing it with teachers is that until educators know where they are, they cannot figure out which way they need to go.

Only when schools develop a shared understanding of current reality can a commitment to change be initiated and sustained.

How does this relate to the issue of low teacher expectations? The hope is that after reviewing the survey results the school staff will seek additional information that will lead them to understand why they said what they did. Examples of the kinds of questions that might need to be asked are: What is known about student performance? What kind of academic growth are students experiencing over time? What percentage of students are dropping out? What is the average attendance each day? 1st period? 6th period? What percentage of students master grade level objectives? What percentage of students are suspended or expelled each year? each month?

Only when schools develop a shared understanding of current reality can a commitment to change be initiated and sustained. Deming (1988) refers to this

kind of knowledge as "profound knowledge" and explains that only as organizations acquire profound knowledge will continuous improvement be possible.

Providing teachers with information about the school's present performance increases the likelihood that they will be willing to use the information to make the needed changes.

The research on implementation of educational innovations teaches us that when innovations are imposed from the outside they do not last. Educators also have learned that when teachers are provided with information about what they are doing in a nonthreatening, noncoercive environment, they are much more likely to make changes that are beneficial. Providing teachers with information about the school's present performance increases the likelihood that they will be willing to use the information to make the needed changes.

One caution is that the effort to collect information must be driven by a sincere desire to understand how well the school is doing and to produce a shared understanding of what is and is not working. If information is used to point fingers or place blame, the school would be better off not to ask the questions at all.

Rethinking the Role of Leadership

Senge begins *The Fifth Discipline* by stating that many of the problems facing organizations can be traced to a lack of leadership. W.E. Deming, a leading advocate for total quality management (TQM), is even more adamant on this point. He states that 85-90 percent of an organization's problems are due to the decisions made by leadership. There is no reason to think that education is any different. If teachers are to change their expectations for students significantly, it is unreasonable to assume that the classroom is the only place where change is needed. This conclusion is particularly evident when a careful examination of the factors contributing to low teacher expectations shows that many of these factors reside outside of the classroom.

For years, education has subscribed to the notion that it was administrators' responsibility to provide leadership. Those who hold this belief have failed to recognize that such leadership, while heroic, is not necessary or even effective in organizations as loosely coupled as schools. In contrast, Senge proposes that we not only need a different definition of leadership, we also need to think differently about the kinds of things that leaders should do. He proposes that a leader's "new work" should include a commitment to:

- Being the organization's architect
- Providing stewardship
- Being a teacher

Leader as Architect: To explain why leaders need to be architects, Senge uses the analogy of trying to turn a large ship. He asks, Who is most important in

ensuring that the ship can be turned successfully—the captain, the first mate, the navigator, or the engineer down in the engine room? Senge suggests that the single most important person in making sure that a ship can be turned successfully is the architect who designed the ship. If it is not well designed, it will be nearly impossible to maneuver. This ship, regardless of its other features, will be effectively useless. It is vital that the design be made with a clear understanding of the ship's purpose. If the purpose of schools is to provide a quality education for all students, then leaders should design the organization with that purpose in mind. Yet considerable evidence suggests that schools as currently designed are not operating in the best interest of either the students they seek to educate or the people who work in them. The failure of schools to educate students is particularly acute in urban cities.

Earlier in this monograph, I quoted Asa Hilliard as saying that current reform efforts were like rearranging the deck chairs on the *Titanic*. It is an appropriate analogy. If, as Senge suggests, many of the factors and conditions that affect teachers' expectations are beyond their control, then perhaps what is needed is the fundamental redesign of schools as we know them. If so, then leaders have a responsibility to get on with the task.

Leader as Steward: The second dimension of leadership, according to Senge, is providing stewardship. By stewardship, Senge means that someone (or perhaps some group) within the organization needs to accept responsibility for ensuring that everyone who works in the organization is clear about why it exists. For example, schools give a lot of lip service to the belief that "all children can learn." It is important that the steward makes sure that this belief is put into practice and that day-to-day decisions are consistent with these beliefs. The act of stewardship means being entrusted with the responsibility for something. In education, one cannot assume that everyone has a clear picture of the school's purpose, and therefore the role of stewardship is critical.

Leader as Teacher: The central premise of The Fifth Discipline is that the only organizations that will exist in the future will be those in which everyone is a learner. This prediction contains a powerful message for education. If we are truly committed to the belief that "all children can learn," then we must necessarily be committed to learning for all, and the word "all" has to mean just that—everyone.

For schools to become learning organizations, the school's leader(s) must accept responsibility for creating conditions that promote and enhance learning for everyone. Principals must create opportunities for teachers to acquire information about what is occurring in the school. Until teachers have such opportunities, no one will have a clear understanding of "current reality."

Principals need to create opportunities for teachers to learn about current research and to apply that research in their classrooms in an environment that promotes learning. Perhaps most important of all, principals need to create a climate that promotes risk taking and eliminates the fear of failure. If this process is successful, schools will be able to develop a shared vision about what needs to be done and engage in the kinds of activities that are needed to make this shared vision a reality.

School Climate

Underlying all of the concepts discussed in this section is the assumption that the climate of the school supports such efforts. However, the presence of effective communication skills is not a reality in many schools. Similarly, any effort to engage in team learning or to develop a shared vision is also highly dependent on a school climate that is conducive to such efforts.

It would be both short-sighted and foolhardy to undertake efforts to identify a school's current reality, introduce the new knowledge that educators need, or rethink the role of leadership unless conditions such as a productive, positive school climate are present or emerging. The effort to develop a shared understanding of a school's "current reality" is built upon an assumption that the people who work in the school possess the communication skills that will allow them to engage in the necessary dialogue with each other.

Below is a brief discussion about some of the kinds of climate issues that must be addressed if the expectations that teachers have for students are to change.

Communication: When effective communication is discussed as a necessary condition for change, educators tend to disengage from the conversation. Because they spend their entire day talking to people, they assume that the one thing they do well is communicate. However, we are talking about the kind of conversation that occurs in schools in a climate of "collegiality" rather than "congeniality." Judith Warren Little (1981) explains that the norm of collegiality is typified by the presence of four specific behaviors:

- Adults in schools *talk about practice*.
- Adults in schools *observe one another* engaged in the practice of teaching and administration.
- Adults in schools engage one another in *work on curriculum* by planning, designing, researching, and evaluating curriculum.
- Adults in schools *teach one another* what they know about teaching, learning, and leading.

These behaviors are very different from the norm of congeniality in which the most important thing is that everyone gets along. Why is the norm of congeniality so strong? Part of the answer lies in the following observations:

- Nowhere in the training and professional preparation of teachers or administrators is a significant amount of time invested in preparing them to work with adults.

- Teachers spend the bulk of their time working in isolation from one another.

- The kinds of verbal interactions that adults have with one another tend to be short and usually are focused on resolving an immediate problem or crisis.

These statements, if accurate, imply that it is possible for teachers to go through entire days without engaging in significant conversation with one another about teaching, learning, and leading in their school. Consequently, the issues that need to be addressed may never come up for discussion.

I am reminded about how one high school math department determined teaching assignments. The department head, who served in that capacity because he had the most experience and the most years of college education, decided what he wanted to teach. Then the schedule was passed to the next most senior member of the department, who made his or her choice, and so on until each teacher had made his or her choice. Whether such a strategy was in the best interest of students was never a topic for discussion because of the potential for disagreement, even though everyone knew that the result of such a decision was that the most experienced teachers taught the best students and the least experienced teachers taught the most difficult ones.

Collegial conversations focus on what is occurring in the school and, in particular, on what needs to be done to improve the quality of education for students. Barth (1990) recognizes that such conversations may, by their very nature, cause the people who work in a school to come into conflict with one another on occasion. However, he also believes that until educators move beyond the need to get along and begin to act as professionals, they will continue doing themselves and their students a grave disservice.

Team Learning: Senge states that when groups of people in organizations get together to make decisions, what passes for communication is advocacy. He believes that "inquiry" needs to happen before real team learning can occur. He explains that when a group of people come together, they typically come to the meeting ready to defend or advocate for a position or viewpoint. In such situations, very little actual learning occurs. In contrast, if the same group of individuals could come to that meeting in a "spirit of inquiry"—the willingness to suspend one's own position long enough to listen to the other person's—then something very different could occur. In this kind of communication, everyone grows in understanding, and when the time comes to make a decision, the participants have a much greater understanding of what they are deciding.

The collegiality that Barth describes would not be rancorous nor create ill will if it occurred in the spirit of inquiry. One should assume that there is a place for advocacy in the decision-making process. The premise is that by beginning with inquiry advocacy becomes less adversarial, because everyone involved in making the decision is better informed about the other viewpoints and is more aware of where commonalities exist.

Until the skills of effective communication exist and team learning is valued, changes in teachers' expectations are unlikely to occur.

What does this approach have to do with teacher expectations? Many of the issues that confront schools are never really addressed precisely because the climate of the school (e.g., communication and team learning) is not conducive to addressing them. Any discussion about changing education practices that negatively affect student performance is not an easy conversation to have. Until the skills of effective communication exist and team learning is valued, changes in teachers' expectations are unlikely to occur.

Shared Vision: When writing for educators, one hesitates even to mention terms such as shared vision, because what passes for a school's vision often is nothing more than someone's personal vision that has been superimposed upon the school. All of the preceding topics described in this section presuppose that the school does in fact seek to develop a shared vision. The key word in the phrase "shared vision" is the word "shared." The reality is that everyone in a school has a vision of what the school should look like and the kinds of things it should do. The problem for schools is not the lack of vision, but the existence of several visions all strongly held and all competing with one another.

Educators need to develop the internal capacity to engage in inquiry and advocacy based upon the norms of collegiality. This attitude leads to the ability to develop a shared understanding of "current reality." Only then will those who work in schools be able to sit down and create a "shared vision" of what they want the school to look like and accomplish.

Conclusion

The focus of this monograph is the relationship between teacher expectations and student achievement. The reality is that low teacher expectations for student achievement exist in America's urban schools to a much greater degree than they do elsewhere. It is important that educators address this issue now, because of the significant cumulative effect that such expectations may have on students during their educational careers and ultimately during their lives. That 40 percent of the students in our cities never make it to high school graduation is testimony to the urgency of this issue.

It is important to note, however, that clear evidence indicates that the children who attend urban schools do possess the capacity to learn and that many teachers believe that the students in their classes can learn. Perhaps most important of all is that entire schools can be found in

which all of the students experience academic success.

Several years ago, Ron Edmonds made a commitment to find schools that were successfully educating all children. He reasoned that if he could find one school in which all children were successful, then success should be possible for all schools. For Ron Edmonds, the belief that all children could learn was nonnegotiable—a clear demonstration of high expectations.

This monograph is predicated on this same belief and also on the belief that the kinds of expectations we should have for the students who attend urban schools must also extend to the teachers and administrators working in those schools.

Urban educators will be able to address the issue of low teacher expectations for students only to the extent that they can fundamentally change their present ways of thinking about what schools are for and how they are organized. We need to change our views about the abilities of our students and their capacity to learn. We need to expand our thoughts about all of the conditions that promote learning. We need to think differently about the teachers of those students and recognize that they themselves have needs that are not being met. We must move beyond viewing the teacher as the problem and create schools in which teachers can become part of the solution.

The reality in many schools is that many of the conditions that are needed for teachers to act differently do not exist. Asa Hilliard concluded a recent article (1991) with the following statement:

> "The risk for our children in school is not a risk associated with their intelligence. Our failures have nothing to do with poverty, nothing to do with race, nothing to do with language, nothing to do with style, nothing to do with the need to discover new pedagogy, nothing to do with the development of unique and differentiated special pedagogues, nothing to do with the children's families. All of these are red herrings. The study of them may ultimately lead to some greater insight into the instructional process; but at present they serve to distract attention from the fundamental problem facing us today. We have one and only one problem: Do we truly will to see each and every child in this nation develop to the peak of his or her capacities?
>
> If our destination is excellence on a massive scale, not only must we change from the slow lane into the fast lane; we literally must change highways. Perhaps we need to abandon the highways altogether and take flight, because the highest goals that we can imagine are well within reach for those who have the will to excellence."

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North Central Regional Educational Laboratory
1900 Spring Road, Suite 300
Oak Brook, IL 60521-1480
(708) 571-4700
Fax (708) 571-4716